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## Introduction to Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards

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The main goal of academic standards is to ensure a high-quality equitable education for all learners. Standards establish high expectations for learning at given grades, provide clear progressions of learning across grades, and guide schools and districts to design, develop, and deliver learning experiences that enable students to successfully complete the standards and benchmarks.

In response to federal regulations requiring academic standards ([Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Public Law No. 103-382](#)), Minnesota requires the development of state standards ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.021](#)) for the following content areas:

- language arts
- mathematics
- science
- social studies
- physical education
- the arts

Local standards must be developed for health and career and technical education. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards must be used for world languages.

### What is the purpose of academic standards?

The standards are intended to raise academic expectations for students, teachers, and schools but must refrain from directing any specific curriculum, instructional method or assessment ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.02](#)). Standards focus on outcomes for student learning rather than inputs such as instructional time requirements, required curriculum topics, reporting requirements, etc.

### What are standards and benchmarks?

An academic standard is:

- A summary description of student learning in a content area ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.018](#)).
- Comprised of one or more benchmarks.

Students must fulfill credit requirements “sufficient to satisfy all of the standards” in that subject ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.024](#)).

A benchmark is:

- Specific knowledge or skill that a student must master to complete part of an academic standard by the end of the grade level or grade band (Minn. Stat. § 120B.018).
- Schools must offer and students must achieve all benchmarks for an academic standard to satisfactorily complete that state standard (Minn. Stat. § 120B.023).

## How are the standards developed?

The standards review process ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.021](#)) requires participation from various stakeholders including parents, educators, administrators, school board members, higher education faculty, and business representatives. This statute also provides the timeline for standards revision. The standards are reviewed in the following years and every 10 years thereafter:

School Year	Standards Revised
2017-18	Arts
2018-19	Science
2019-20	Language Arts
2020-21	Social Studies
2021-22	Mathematics
2026-27	Physical Education

The standards review process includes opportunities for public comment and feedback both before the committee convenes and also in response to each draft. In addition, feedback is provided by national content area experts. The rulemaking process begins after the commissioner approves the final draft.

## What is the relationship between standards and credit requirements?

A credit is defined as an academic year of study as determined by the district ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.018](#)).

Students must successfully complete the following high school level credits for graduation ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.024](#)):

- Four credits of language arts sufficient to satisfy all of the academic standards in English language arts.
- Three credits of mathematics, including an algebra II credit or its equivalent, sufficient to satisfy all of the academic standards in mathematics.
- Three credits of science, including at least one credit of biology, one credit of chemistry or physics, and one elective credit of science. The combination of credits under this clause must be sufficient to satisfy (i) all of the academic standards in either chemistry or physics and (ii) all other academic standards in science.
- Three and one-half credits of social studies, encompassing at least United States history, geography, government and citizenship, world history, and economics sufficient to satisfy all of the academic standards in social studies.
- One credit of the arts sufficient to satisfy all of the state or local academic standards in the arts.
- A minimum of seven elective credits.

Algebra I must be completed by the end of 8th grade sufficient to satisfy all of the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade standards in mathematics. It does not constitute a high school credit for graduation.

Students may use a Career and Technical Education course as an equivalent for a mathematics, science, or arts credit provided the course credit is sufficient to satisfy the requisite content standards and the teacher is licensed in mathematics, science, or arts or has passed the content area assessment. Agriculture teacher license is sufficient to provide a science credit in all courses with the exception of biology.

## **Where can the standards be found?**

Academic standards documents and additional information can be found on the [Academic Standards \(K-12\)](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/) page (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/>).

For information about other kinds of standards, visit the [Minnesota Standards Portal](https://standards.education.mn.gov) and explore resources on the Standards-based Education page (<https://standards.education.mn.gov>).